

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 VIENTI 05510 01 OF 02 081020Z

17

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01 EB-07 IO-10 TRSE-00 /091 W

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P R 080458Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5203

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 5510

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LA

SUBJ: CALLS ON LAO MINISTERS OF PUBLIC WORKS, INFORMATION
AND INTERIOR

SUMMARY. I CALLED ON (PATHET LAO) MINISTERS OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFORMATION, RESPECTIVELY SINGKAPO SIKHOTCHOUNAMALY AND MA KHAYKHAMPHITHOUN, AND ON (VIENTIANE SIDE) MINISTER OF INTERIOR KHOUN ONE VORAVONG. SINGKAPO AND MA WERE FRIENDLY AND APPEARED TO FOLLOW A CURRENT PARTY LINE IN WELCOMING A CONTINUED U.S. DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE AND IN PRODDING FOR A RESUMPTION OF AMERICAN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IN SOME FORM. KHOUN ONE WAS APATHETIC AND TYPIFIED THE RESIGNATION AND FATALISM OF THE MEMBERS OF THE OLD REGIME WHO RETAIN ANY POSITION OF NOMINAL IMPORTANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. SEPTEMBER 3 PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER (GENERAL) SINGKAPO SIKHOTCHOUNAMALY RECEIVED ME ALONE IN HIS OFFICE IN THE RATHER SEEDY MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND WE SPOKE IN FRENCH FOR ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES. OUT-CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 VIENTI 05510 01 OF 02 081020Z

SIDE A MIXED GROUP OF WELL-DRESSED YOUNG LAO MEN AND

WOMEN, CIVIL SERVICE OR STUDENT TYPES, WERE DIGGING AND CHOPPING AT THE LOCAL EQUIVALENT OF CRAB GRASS UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF UNIFORMED PATHET LAO WHO WERE OBVIOUSLY CONDUCTING SOME SORT OF CONSCIOUSNESS DEEPENING EXERCISE.

2. SINGKAPO WAS WARM AND FRIENDLY IN MANNER. ALTHOUGH HE MENTIONED HIS 30 YEARS OF STRUGGLE AND DESCRIBED HIMSELF AT PRESENT AS A SOLDIER MOBILIZED FOR DUTY AS A MINISTER, HE LAID GREAT STRESS ON THE ABSENCE OF ANY LAO HATRED FOR AMERICANS. HE MADE FIVE ADDITIONAL POINTS.

A. LAOS WAS FAR BEHIND OTHER INDOCHINESE COUNTRIES IN MATERIAL RESOURCES AND HAD TO CATCH UP USING AID FROM ALL SOURCES;

B. UNITED STATES AND LAOS OUGHT TO DEAL DIRECTLY AND FRANKLY WITH EACH OTHER AND NOT DEPEND ON THIRD PARTIES OR INTERMEDIARIES WHO MIGHT GARBEL THEIR RESPECTIVE VIEWS;

C. HE WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO GET PARTS FOR ALL SORTS OF PUBLIC WORKS EQUIPMENT OF U.S. ORIGIN, FOR EXAMPLE, RATHER THAN BUYING THEM FROM GERMANY OR ELSEWHERE;

D. THE LAO ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE NAM NGUM DAM, FIRST BECAUSE THEY NEEDED THE ELECTRICITY FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS OF THEIR OWN REQUIRED BY THEIR CATCH-UP DEVELOPMENT EFFORT, AND SECONDLY BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO EXPORT IT TO THAILAND WHERE IT WAS ALSO NEEDED. THEY HOPED THE U.S. WOULD GO AHEAD WITH THE FIVE MILLION DOLLAR CONTRIBUTION TO NAM NGUM BECAUSE OTHERWISE THEY WOULD HAVE TO MAKE IT UP FROM AID FROM OTHERDONORS AND THIS WOULD REDUCE THE TOTAL AID AVAILABLE. (I TOLD HIM I UNDERSTOOD U.S. HAD NOT YET REACHED DECISION ON THIS MATTER BUT WOULD BE STUDYING ADB COMMITTEE REPORTS AND I DID NOT KNOW WHAT DECISION WOULD BE.)

E. HE WOULD ALWAYS BE AVAILABLE TO ME FOR DIRECT DISCUSSION OF ANY PROBLEM.

3. I REPEATED WHAT I HAD TOLD SOUVANNA PHOUMA AND
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PAGE 03 VIENTI 05510 01 OF 02 081020Z

PHOUNE SIPASEUTH: THAT I WAS GLAD TO BE BACK IN LAOS, UNDERSTOOD WE HAD HAD AND WOULD HAVE PROBLEMS BUT WOULD DO MY BEST TO HAVE BEST POSSIBLE RELATIONS IN CIRCUMSTANCES INCLUDING FRANK PRESENTATION OF U.S. GOVERNMENT VIEWS AND FAITHFUL REPORTING OF PNGU VIEWS. I ADDED TERMINATION OF AID AGREEMENT AND DEPARTURE OF USAID AT PGNU INITIATIVE HAD CREATED SITUATION WHICH INHIBITED DISCUSSION OF ANY POSSIBLE FUTURE ECONOMIC

ASSISTANCE. U.S. LAWS WERE IN EFFECT AND MOMENT WAS NOT PROPITIOUS FOR GENERAL DISCUSSION BUT I WOULD OF COURSE REPORT SPECIFIC VIEWS COMMUNICATED TO ME BY PGNU.

4, MA KHAYKHAMPHITHOUN (AKA THAO MA) RECEIVED ME LATER IN THE DAY IN THE SLIGHTLY LESS RUSTIC ATMOSPHERE OF THE INFORMATION MINISTRY. HE SPOKE LAO AND I FRENCH VIA HIS INTERPRETER FOR ABOUT 20 MINUTES. I STARTED BY REITERATING GIST OF PARAGRAPH 3, ABOVE. MA RESPONDED WITH EXPRESSIONS OF WELCOME AND GOOD WISHES AS WELL AS EXPRESSIONS OF GOODWILL FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND PERSONNEL OF THE EMBASSY. HE TOO, ASSURED ME OF HIS READY AVAILABILITY FOR DISCUSSION OF PROBLEMS.

5. MA CITED ALL THE HELP U.S. HAD GIVEN LAOS IN THE PAST AND EXPRESSED HOPE AID WOULD BE GIVEN IN THE FUTURE IN VIEW OF U.S. "PROMISE TO BIND UP THE WOUNDS OF WAR IN LAOS." I COULD NOT OF COURSE LET THIS GO BY AND LED INTO A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE PARIS ACCORDS AND THE VIENTIANE ACCORDS, POINTING OUT THAT MUCH HAD HAPPENED SINCE THE FIRST INCLUDING THE DEPLOYMENT OF MOST OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY INTO SOUTH VIET-NAM AND THE VIENTIANE ACCORDS, AS I UNDERSTOOD THEM, HAD BEEN A DECLARATION OF LAO INTENTIONS. MA DID NOT CHALLENGE ANY OF THIS BUT REITERATED THE HOPE THAT SOME U.S. AID WOULD BE FORTHCOMING. I AGAIN REVIEWED THE SUBSTANCE OF PARAGRAPH 3, ABOVE, AND SAID I REALLY COULD NOT DISCUSS THIS QUESTION. MA SAID HE HOPED I WOULD THINK ABOUT WHAT HE HAD TOLD ME ABOUT "BINDING UP THE WOUNDS OF WAR" AND I REPLIED THAT I WOULD REPORT HIS REMARKS.

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 05510 02 OF 02 080601Z

16

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01 EB-07 IO-10 TRSE-00 /091 W

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P R 080458Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 5510

6. MA SAID THAT MY UNDERTAKING TO PRESENT U.S. VIEWS FRANKLY AND REPORT PGNU VIEWS FAITHFULLY WAS ALL HE COULD ASK FOR AND HE RENEWED ALL SORTS OF GOOD WISHES FOR ME AND THE REST OF THE PEOPLE IN THE EMBASSY.

7. SEPTEMBER 4 I CALLED ON KHOUN ONE VORAVONG IN HIS COMPARATIVELY LUXURIOUS OFFICE IN THE IMPOSING INTERIOR/ POLICE BUILDING. KHOUN ONE, WHOM I FIRST MET IN 1951 WHEN HE WAS TREASURER OF LAOS, MADE THREE BASIC POINTS:

A. HE IS NOW 70 YEARS OLD AND HAD BEEN CALLED OUT OF TEN YEARS' RETIREMENT EARLIER THIS YEAR TO TAKE THE POST OF INTERIOR MINISTER. IN FACT, THAT WAS HIS SECOND RECALL FROM RETIREMENT.

B. HE HAD BEEN BUSY AT FIRST BUT THERE WAS NOT MUCH FOR HIM TO DO NOW.

C. TIMES HAD CHANGED AND THE IMPORTANT THING NOW WAS FOR EVERYONE TO LEARN THE WAY THE NEW SYSTEM WORKED AND ADJUST TO IT.

8. COMMENT: SINGKAPO AND MA OPERATE AT LEAST SUPERFICIALLY IN A TRADITIONAL LAO FASHION, AND IT WOULD BE A PLEASURE TO DEAL WITH THEM IF THEY WERE REALLY ALL THAT IMPORTANT IN THE PRESENT SET-UP. I AM REASON-CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 VIENTI 05510 02 OF 02 080601Z

ABLY SURE THAT THEY ARE FOLLOWING A CURRENT PARTY LINE IN WELCOMING A CONTINUED U.S. DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE IN LAOS AND IN LETTING IT BE KNOWN THAT THEY ANTICIPATE AND WOULD WELCOME SOME SORT OF U.S. ASSISTANCE. KHOUN ONE TYPIFIES THE RESIGNATION AND FATALISM OF THE MEMBERS OF THE OLD REGIME WHO REMAIN IN THE COUNTRY AND IN ANY POSITION OF NOMINAL IMPORTANCE. CORCORAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ESTABLISHMENT, ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 SEP 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975VIENTI05510
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750309-0817
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750971/aaaacibz.tel
Line Count: 214
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 MAY 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <19 NOV 2003 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CALLS ON LAO MINISTERS OF PUBLIC WORKS, INFORMATION AND INTERIOR
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LA, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006